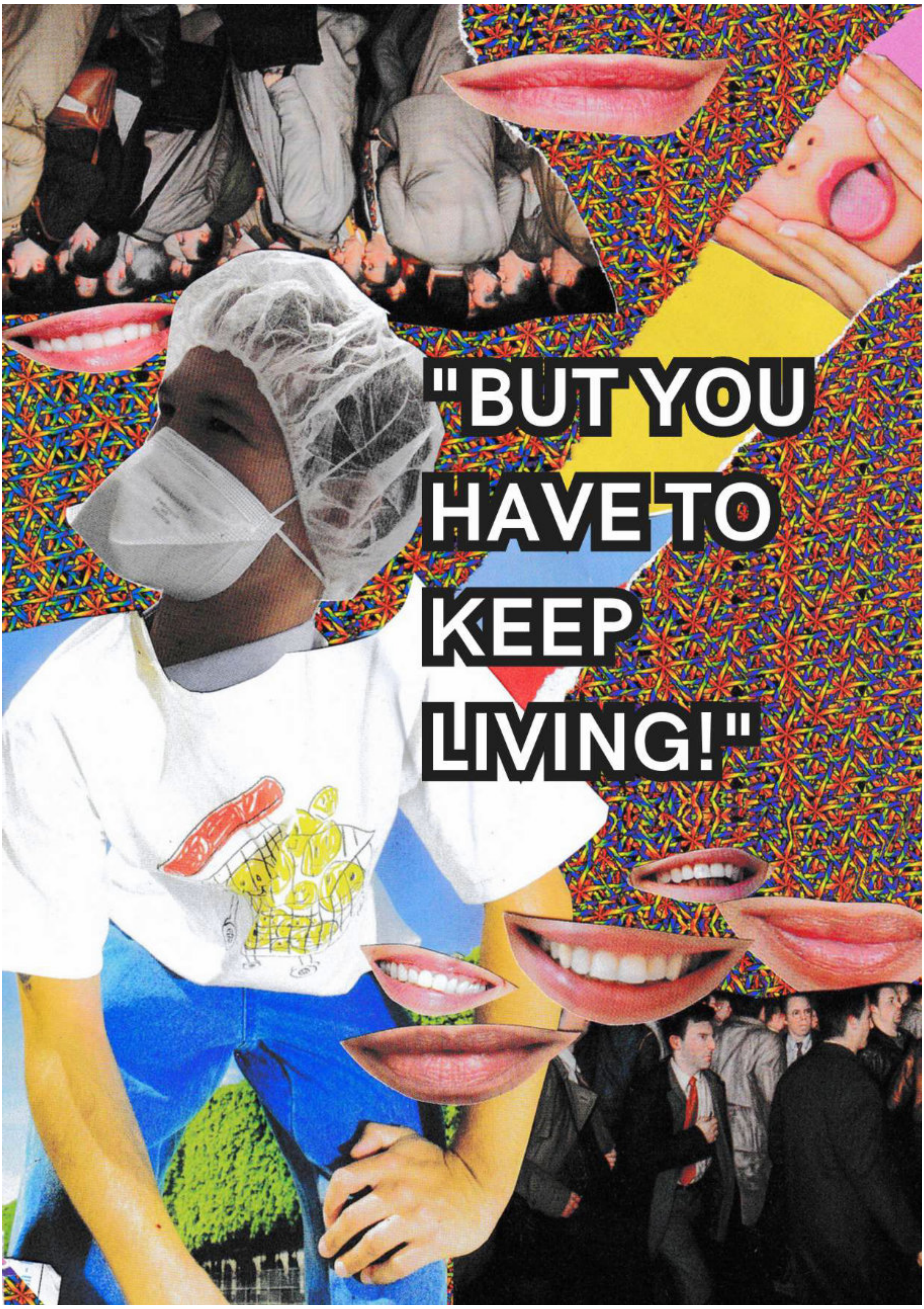

"BUT YOU HAVE TO KEEP LIVING!"

Converted by
IDR
SOLUTIONS

« Oh - you’re wearing a mask. Are you sick?
- No, I’m not sick, as far as I know. I’m wearing it so I don’t get sick. And just in case, too. Covid is often asymptomatic.
- This is still about Covid? That’s so sad you’re living in fear like this. It’s been years, you can’t think about Covid forever. »

« Covid is here to stay. We have to live with it now.
- Yeah, it seems like it’s not going away anytime soon. You’ve asked me before why I wear a mask, that’s why.
- That doesn’t make sense. Why change the way you live if there’s no end to it? Just accept it’s the way things are now.
- I could say the same thing to you. We wear masks, “that’s the way things are now”. I won’t accept that getting sick constantly with such a dangerous virus is just inevitable.
- But it is. You’re delusional. »

*« **When some people get Covid, they have symptoms for months, years, or it even worsens previous health issues and then their lives are impacted forever.***
- Yeah, that’s sad for them. But you can’t protect everyone. You have to live your life. »

*« **Some people are at risk of very serious consequences if they catch Covid. I don’t want to catch it and spread it to someone more vulnerable than me.***
- If someone has weak health, they can just stay at home. The rest of us have to keep living. »

I don't want to "live my life" to the detriment of someone else's.

And I don't even think wearing a mask keeps me from "living my life" at all. Most people who make comments on my mask don't even know that's not the only thing that has changed in my life since the Covid pandemic started. They'd probably have even more incredibly insightful comments about it.

DON'T SELL THIS ZINE!

They don't know I also isolate as much as I can when I'm sick or think I might be, which seems to me like basic decency.

They don't know I have a monthly budget of antigen tests so that I can react fast if I ever have a suspicion but can't get a proper PCR test.

They don't know I have the local mask bloc on speed dial *(aka some of my friends are part of it)* to bring masks to events I participate in.

To me, none of those things are keeping me from "living". Like at all. It allows me to live more, to take as little risk as possible of catching something that would lead me to "live" less, me or somebody else.

This zine is made of a lot of pictures of myself masking in various situations. I wanted to compile activities I've been doing, events I've been going to, all while wearing a mask. I want to show examples of everything you can do while caring. So the initial idea was pretty lighthearted. But I of course will make mentions of illness, lives lost to the pandemic, and other topics that aren't all happy and easy to think about.

As far as I know, I'm not particularly "at risk" or "vulnerable" to Covid. Technically, all of us are, because a single infection can lead to long Covid and other issues. But there are people who are already and for sure facing more risk than others.

To those of you affected in this way, if you read this, all of my love, and know that I'm aware that many of the things I'm showing myself doing in these pages were taken from you. Some because your health was affected and won't allow it anymore, but some would be able to still participate if people wore masks in public to limit the risks. That's the direction I'm going with - trying to show people there's really no excuse for excluding you, because everything they do without a mask, I do with, and it goes just fine.

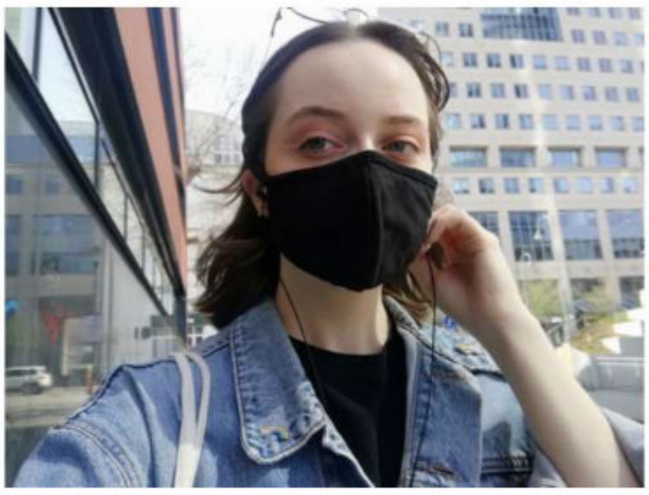
DON'T SELL THIS ZINE!

This is my first masked picture in 2020. Before I *(and actually most of us)* knew which masks to wear for the best protection, before I even acquired surgical masks - I happened to already own a fabric mask.

So these first pictures don't really count - I'm not necessarily "living" beyond what is absolutely necessary, I'm just running errands, and masks were still mandatory. But they show where we started.

When the pandemic began, I was living in Germany to do my last year of bachelor's degree with Erasmus (student exchange program).

After the semester ended, I moved back to France and to a new city I had never been to before.



Spring 2020, Jena, Germany - On a snack run

Fall 2020, Lyon, France - Getting groceries

The summer between those two pictures, I was living with my mom and sibling, and quite stressed about them not masking or avoiding risky social situations. Actually, the months leading up to moving back home, before I knew if/when I would be moving back, that was my main anxiety.

Since my semesters in Germany were through the exchange program with my university, there was a chance they would make students come back home to France. And I didn't want that. I would sometimes cry of frustration getting off the phone with my mom, who was telling me what she was up to - which was not social distancing enough for my taste.

I was scared if I had to move back home, I'd have to risk getting sick if she did, since I no longer had my student apartment and would have to move back in with her *(which I later did by choice)*. I was thankful I got to stay until the end of the semester. But that summer spent at home was definitely stressful.

This is where I start saying what I will keep saying throughout those pages:

Is *this* what you call "living"?

Risking your and other people's health, making them scared you'll get them sick because of irresponsible choices, instead of just changing some habits?

I was very anxious. All the time. Which is a normal response to watching a pandemic be wildly poorly managed. To seeing people not care, and not understanding why.

Winter 2020, Lyon, France

Summer 2021, somewhere on a highway in France while moving back home to the North

When classes started again the following fall, I stayed for two semesters in Lyon. The plan when I moved there was to do a master's degree in sociology. But by the end of the first year, I wasn't so sure anymore. And I wasn't doing great mental health wise. So I decided to take a gap year. I had my plan all set up: a paid volunteer job, but those don't pay enough for rent, so I'd find one in my mom's city, live with her, help with bills, and figure out what to do next.

I don't know how much the social isolation contributed to the chaos in my emotional life at the time. France was on its second or third Covid lockdown and I didn't know anyone in my new city to have a "pod" like some people had. So as stressful as it was going to be living with other people, making their risk assessment my own, at least I wouldn't be fully alone in a 10m$_2$ apartment.

The year I lived with my mom, I went to my volunteer job with a mask on every day. I worked at a school, where masks were still required for students, but teachers and staff took theirs off in the teachers' room, and couldn't understand why I didn't.
"It's only mandatory for the kids!"
I ate my lunches outside as much as I could, and managed to work from home some days, since my job was to be in charge of their social media - not needed to be physically present every day.

That year, I also joined an indoor rock climbing club. And, you guessed it, wore a mask to climb.
"Can you really breathe with that? You know you're allowed to take it off, right?"
It seemed nobody could understand why I would wear a mask while working out. What I couldn't understand was why people for who sport was so important, for who their bodies were so important, whose health was so crucial to being able to participate in their passion, wouldn't protect their health.

Several people there got Covid and everyone gave a *shocked pikachu face* as if the virus wasn't very much still going around. Not saying they wouldn't have gotten sick if they wore masks. *(I myself was wearing surgical masks, so nowhere near 100% safe, which even "good" masks aren't because 100% doesn't exist).* But the fact that this experience didn't make them understand why ***I*** wore one... denial?

*this meme, shocked pikachu

September 2021, Paris, France - First picture together while waiting at the worst airport ever
(I'm a CDG airport hater)

But the most important thing that happened that year is that I met my girlfriend in person for the first time!!!! We had been "online dating" if you will - we met while I was in Germany and she lived in the USA.

Still with my fabric masks (sigh) but look at her wearing an actual proper mask to travel! *(Airlines didn't allow fabric masks) (You can't really tell cause I'm hiding her face, but I'm telling you).*

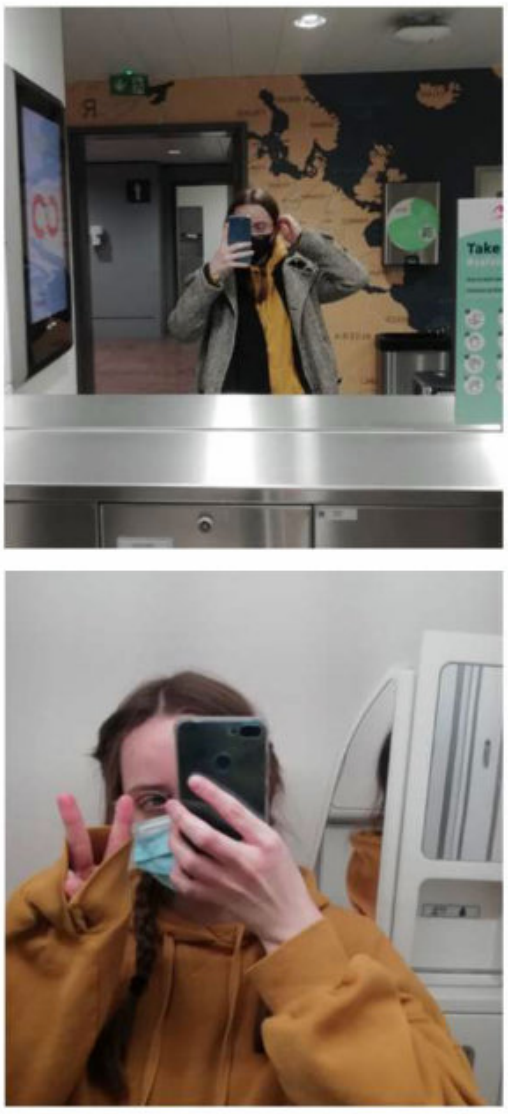
She flew to visit me for a few weeks when travel opened again. You still had to test negative and mask to travel. As it should be...

Then it was my turn to visit!
I wasn't taking that many pictures back then, especially while out, and honestly wasn't doing much - mostly my job and climbing. So I'm jumping several months straight to what's interesting. The rest of the zine is way more pictures and a little less text.

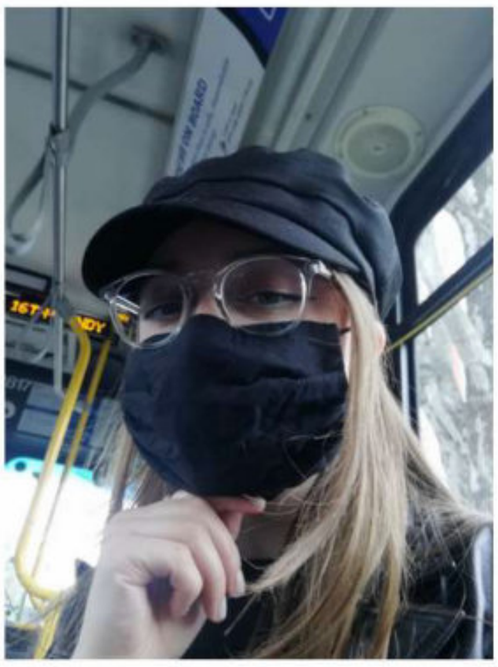
In February 2022 I got on a plane for the first time ever, not without a lot of stress and chaos, but it was to visit my girlfriend, so obviously worth it. I was flying to Oregon, USA.

Had to show proof of vaccination, test negative 24 hours before *(very good rule but very annoying logistically)*, and mask to travel. The plane was nearly empty. I had a row all to myself.

It felt strange *(and still does)* to travel during a pandemic. To do anything that isn't absolute life or death and puts you at risk of getting sick. Is it justified? Is it worth it? Is it okay? Is it safe?



February 2022, somewhere in some airports and/or some planes and/or some trains



February 2022, Portland, USA

Wearing a mask *(very imperfectly at the time, not that I'm perfect today - nobody is, but even less back then)* **didn't stop me from "living"**.

I got to visit a new place, which was cool, even though that's not why I was there. I could've been happy staying home 24/7 because I was with her.

Of course it's still very big to get to visit a new country.

I'm not trying to be ungrateful.
I'm just being gay.

During that gap year of volunteering and crying, I figured I would switch to a degree in communications and marketing since I had a better chance at getting jobs than in my previous field.

And for that, I was moving back to Lille, where I lived before the year in Germany, so I had to look for apartments there.

Wearing a mask *did* feel limiting. So sometimes, I didn't. I had to go visit apartments several times, and when I couldn't find cheap train rides, I would get on car share apps and use that instead. I felt worried about being in a stranger's car. So I didn't wear my mask, to remove one layer of possible antagonizing.

August 2022, omw to Lille, France

I also didn't wear it during apartment visits, to avoid lessening my chances of getting on their good side.

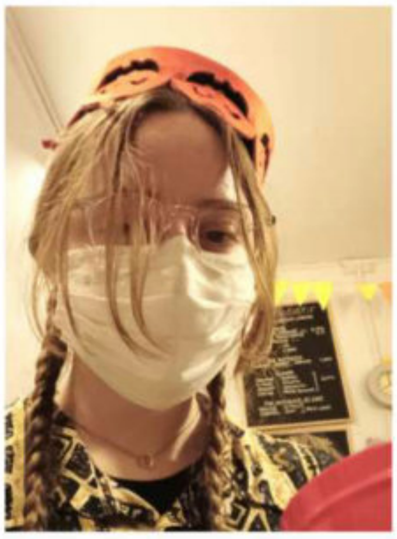
I have an entire minizine about this in a different context *(titled "The only thing that makes it hard wearing a mask while working out is your annoying ass")*, but what's hard about wearing a mask is mostly just **other people giving you a hard time** for something that absolutely does not affect them in any way.

I found an apartment. A school. An internship.
I moved. And I found the local LGBTQIA+ center.
And that changed a lot of things.

This is where I start doing more things, leaving my apartment more, meeting more people.

And the mask? Didn't stop me.

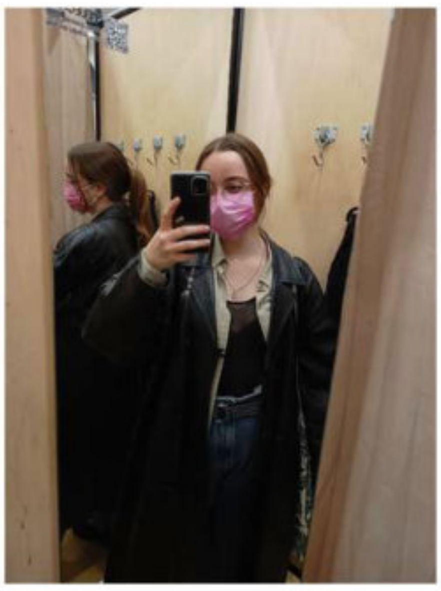
October 2022, Lille, France, bathroom selfie at the LGBTQIA+ center (why)



One of my first parties there probably?

December 2022, probably at school

2022 marked the beginning of two years going to marketing school one day a week, and being an intern at a company the rest of the week.
In both of these settings I usually didn't feel comfortable wearing a mask. Not that I felt comfortable *not* wearing a mask.
I was scared to get sick, and scared to get other people sick. I only really went to three places: work, school, and the LGBTQIA+ center. That last one is where I masked. To protect people there, in case I caught Covid or something else in the environments where I didn't mask.
At work or school, I would have been the only person with a mask, constantly questioned - which I was when I did wear a mask because I felt a little unwell or knew someone else was sick. I carried a mask on me and if someone else was miraculously wearing one, I'd pull mine out. Otherwise, it came off when I got off the metro and came back on when it was time to go home. I couldn't take the social pressure of constant questioning, so I just gaslit myself and pretended that was fine.
It wasn't. I felt anxious, unsafe, lonely, and I knew I was betraying myself and the people I wanted to protect.

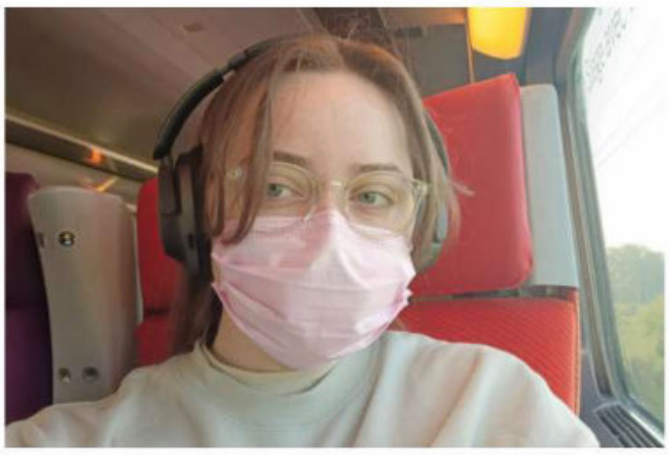


January 2023, thrifting

Wearing a mask allows me to do the things I love without taking unnecessary risks. I truly don't understand how that makes me someone who's "not living life".

The way I choose to protect myself and those around me is not limiting.

Other people's reactions to me expressing care, belief in science and bodily autonomy is what's limiting.
I'll show you more of what I've been up to while masking.

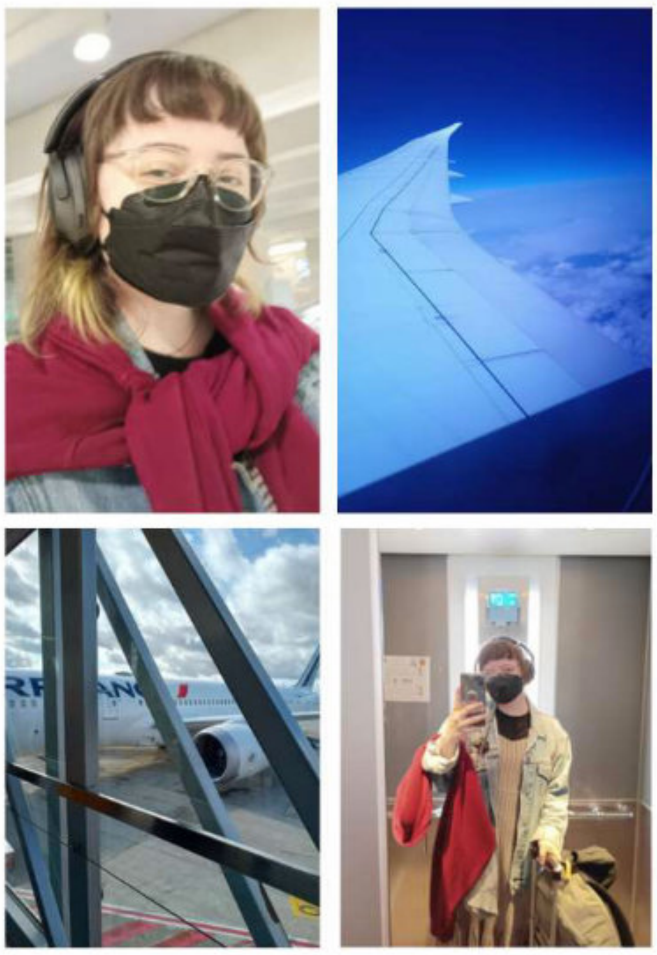


May 2023, on the train to visit family

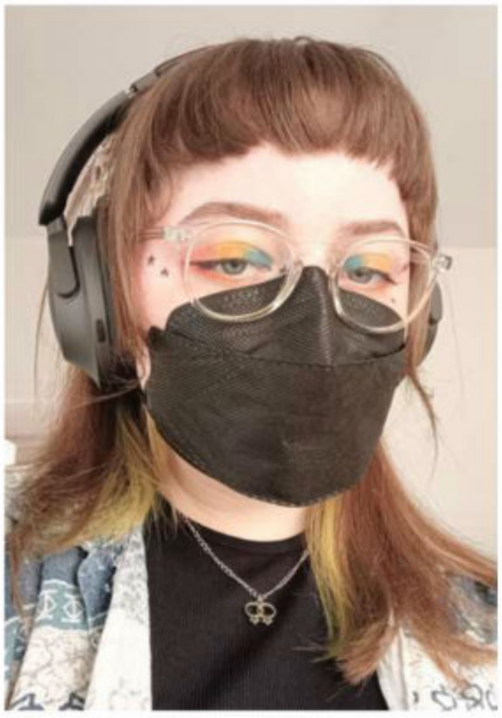
Wearing a mask allows me to do **more**. It allows me to travel, to act for what matters to me, to see the people I love.

Also spot the moment I met a Covid conscious friend who educated me about masks and gave me my first good ones :)

May 2023, Lille - Marching at pride



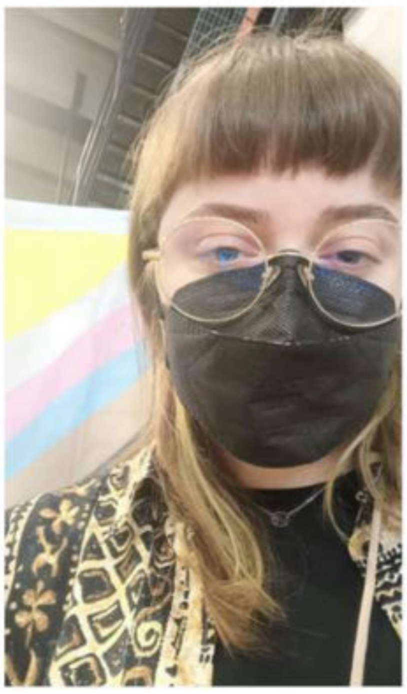
July 2023, on my way to visit my girlfriend in Oregon again



July 2023, got a new haircut - Can't remember if I did then, but I keep my mask at the salon now, and it always goes well

I don't feel limited by wearing a mask. I feel empowered to make decisions. Individually, I can't do anything about the fact that a dangerous virus is still going around. I don't want to say "we" can't do anything about the pandemic though, I believe there are things that can be done collectively. But this pandemic trapped us all. When people say "Covid is here to stay" and what they mean is "so I'll pretend it's not there", I don't understand. What it should mean is that our lives have changed, and so must our practices and habits.

September 2023 - Thrifting



October 2023 - Volunteering

December 2023 - On my way to work

Let me be a real bummer before I move on to the promised "more examples, less rambling" part of the zine.
I'm lucky I get to say "wearing a mask allows me to keep living".

A lot of people lost their lives to Covid. A lot of people lost the way their lives were. They became disabled, or further disabled, following an infection and have no treatment or recognition. All of the "at risk" people who were basically left behind by takes such as *"it's only dangerous for the most fragile!"*, *"just stay home if you're at risk!"*, or *"the rest of us can't all account for the immuno-compromised!"*, lost friends, family, relationships, who refused to protect them. A lot of people lost income which led to losing housing, access to medical care, independance, and more. Those people weren't allowed to "keep living their lives".

Taking the risk to make more people go through this, or risking being affected myself, would not be "living my life". I'm living and letting others live way more by masking, testing frequently, isolating if sick, and generally caring.

Now let me show you just some more of the things I've been doing for the past 5 years while masking.

If you really want to be fair, make it 3 years because I didn't have much of an in-person social life for a while.

I made this zine the way I did because I don't want to hear "nobody even masks anymore".

I made it because I want other masking people to feel less alone.

I made it because I want to show people who are too scared to mask again out of fear of being "the only one" that Covid-cautious mask wearers go everywhere and maybe you'll run into one of us. And maybe you can be the first wherever you go and empower someone else to do it too.

I made it to show you there are so, so many activities you can do while wearing a mask.

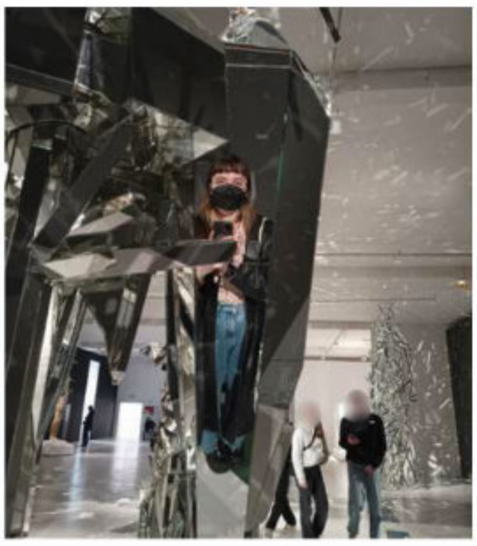
I'm also showing you all of the activities that I was able to do while masking, so maybe if you had to give up some of your hobbies because you can't mask there, like swimming or eating indoors at restaurants, you could find new things to do in here. Tried and tested them for you.

DON'T SELL THIS ZINE!

DON'T SELL THIS ZINE!

Doing fun activities by myself

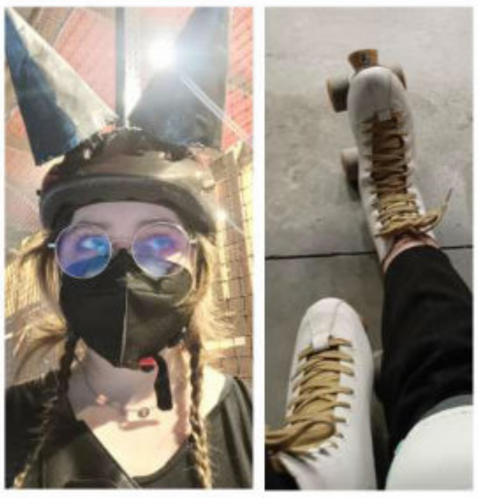
Like visiting art museums...



December 2023

June 2024

And trying new things...

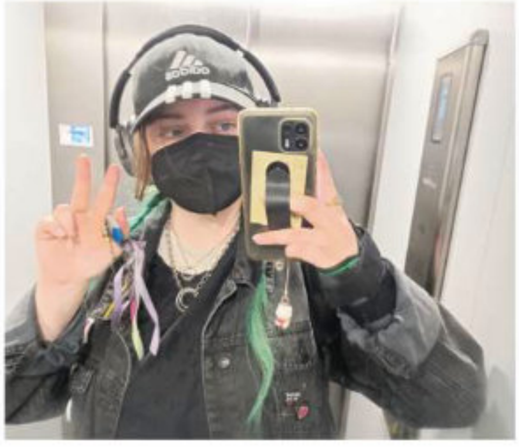


October 2024, roller disco Halloween party.

November 2024, indoor rollerskating

I took a class for a few months, got questioned on my mask a lot, which inspired previously mentioned minizine.

May 2025, solo park date



June 2025, taking myself on a solo date for my birthday. I did some shopping, thrifting, grabbed my favorite food to eat outside.

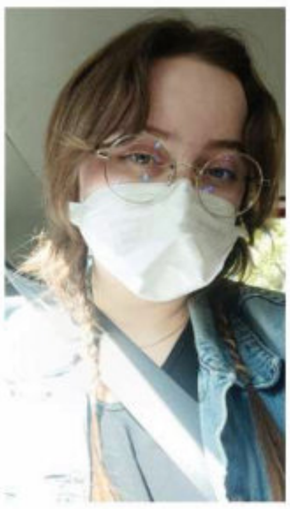
I go through phases where being the only one wearing a mask in a space is uncomfortable, so I do less solo activities when that happens, but I've generally gotten used to it.

Traveling - to visit my girlfriend, mostly

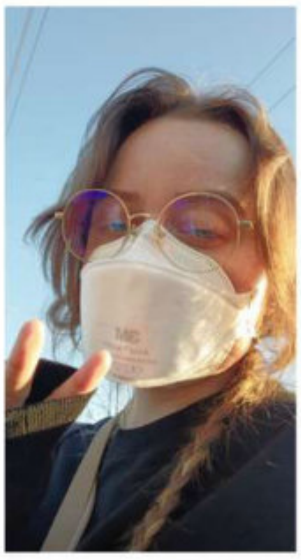
Traveling exposes you to so many people, for so many hours, in spaces that aren't always well ventilated. Besides work, when I travel, it's to visit my girlfriend who lives in North America, so I fly there from France. Typically I spend 1 to 3 hours on a train or bus, then at least 9 on a plane, and maybe 1-2 more hours on another plane. Some hours spent in stations and airports. Wearing a mask is what makes this possible for me. I have a lesser chance of catching a virus that might be going around in all of these places, which keeps me healthy enough to do all of this traveling in the first place, and keeps my partner's health safe as I won't get her sick when I arrive.

September 2024, CDG airport in Paris, going to visit my girlfriend in Portland OR, USA

This is a CO2 meter, there's a correlation between the amount of CO2 and the amount of virus in the air (TLDR explanation don't quote me). The goal was to let me know where / when it was safer to unmask to eat. Didn't actually use it much because I couldn't really do anything about the air quality anyway - you can't go outside once you're past security.

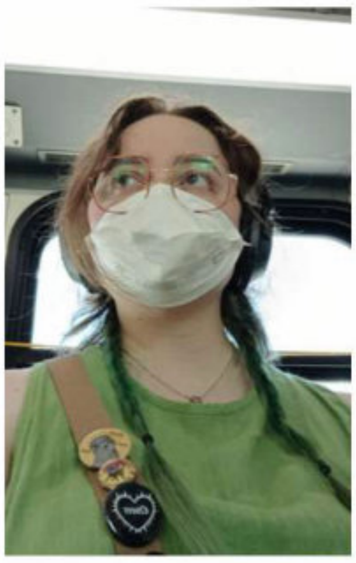


September 2024, visiting all masked event 'Portland Zine Symposium'



September 2024, walking in Portland

June 2025, at the airport, visiting my girlfriend, in Canada this time



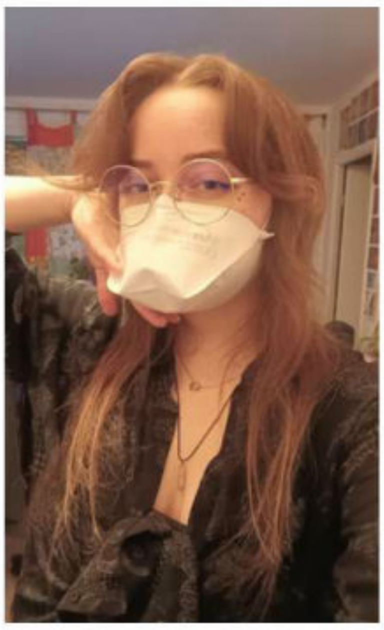
June 2025, visiting Ottawa

Lesbians!!!!!!!!

Being in community: organizing and attending monthly lesbian parties at the LGBTQIA+ center. Several of us organizers mask.
The person who initiated the idea of those parties 2 years ago also wears a mask everywhere, and so do the first few people to volunteer to participate outside of the people she had already rounded up.

I won't lie, it's always a little contradicting in my mind attending those parties, because the concept doesn't really encourage wearing masks since there's a bar and people are invited to bring food. But at the same time you can't really expect people to not eat during an event that lasts 4 hours in the evening. I myself bring food to share, even though I eat it outside once my turn volunteering at the bar is over.
Anyway I really love being in community with everyone who comes, shoutout lesbians and friends

December 2023


November 2024

pigeons
-atelier Nature Queer
Chouk
TIGR
Pout
December 2024

January 2025

August 2025

Sharing with other creatives

Culture
GUIDE

March 2025, attending a collage workshop/hangout

April 2025, talking about DIY patches at a Show&Tell event

I love being around other artists, learning new crafts, and sharing mine. I would feel so isolated, sad and bored if I wasn't able to do those things. I truly cannot understand why the effort of wearing a mask in public spaces isn't worth it to a lot of people, when the result is more accessible spaces that more people can participate in. I've been to so many more creative events in the past 3 years than ever before, with a mask on my face. Turns out you don't need your nose and mouth to be naked to draw and use glue.

BOOBS ARE A
LOT LIKE ZINES
REALLY LIKE ZINES

August and September 2025, on my way to our fully masked queer zine club :)

October 2025, organizing a minizine workshop

Dipping my toes into being an artist: tabling at events

June 2024, Créa'Queer Festival in Lille, France
I had a table for two days and gave a minizine workshop

December 2024, market at the LGBTQIA+ center
I actually organized this one :)

October 2025, zine fest at the LGBTQIA+ center

I'm nowhere near trying to make art into a job, because I have friends who do it, and that reminds me everyday I'm not built for it (for now at least). But I get to do it a little on the side.

The three events on this page required masks for tablers. The public was strongly invited to wear them, and free masks were provided.

At the december market, almost every visitor grabbed a mask at the door and wore it throughout the market.

Accommodations were found for tablers unable to mask (like showing a negative Covid test).

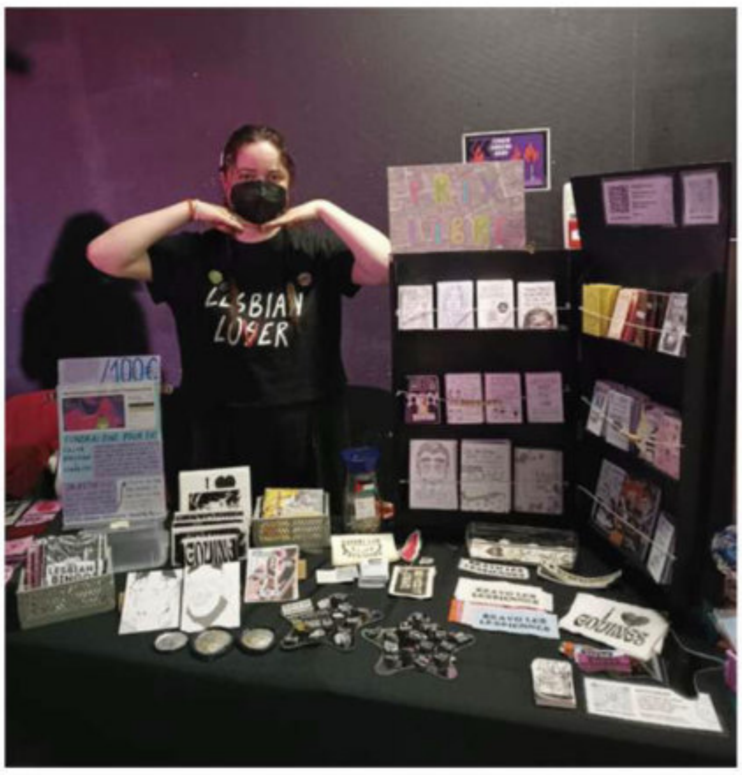
Some people who usually can't visit public spaces *(because one-way masking isn't as safe as everyone masking)* were able to attend.

Who are masks "stopping from living" again?

I also tabled at events where masks were not required, but at least organizers and other tablers weren't weird about it.

December 2024, mini zine market at a café

May 2025, mini-tabling with free zines outside an event



September 2025, tabling at a Queer Punk art market in Lille

The latest event I tabled at where organizers did not require masks, I asked the local mask bloc if I could grab some from them to bring.

With the help of friends we brought a good amount of masks to leave for free at the door. Other tables who weren't already masking didn't use them, but some visitors did, and I handed "we protect each other" stickers to everyone who came up to my table wearing one.

Working

I also have to travel *not* for fun now. About 4 work trips a year.

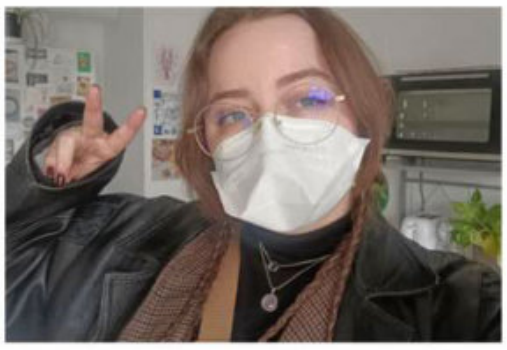
Well I can't complain too much, this work trip took me to Italy. Probably would never have been there. June 2025, traveling by bus then plane to Rome

I work from home at the job I got after finishing school. We don't even have an office at all! For my health, energy and peace, that's what I was looking for.

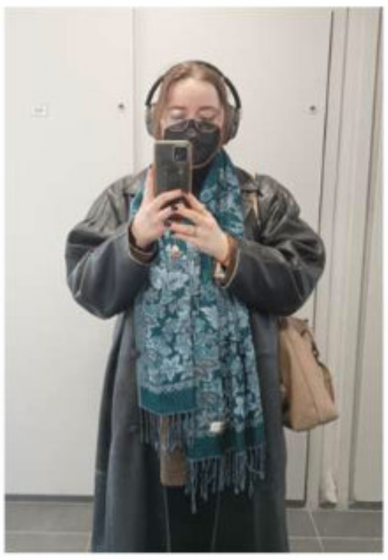
We only meet about 3 to 4 times a year during seminars where we spend 3 to 5 days together, about 60ish people. Then there might be a couple more one-day events I can be required to be at.

My first four work events, I didn't mask. I was too nervous to be in a professional setting with a mask on. At my previous job and school, it was considered "unprofessional". And for the seminars, we're there for days and have every meal together - masking the entire time is difficult.
My latest one-day work event, I kept a mask on the entire time and didn't get that many comments. I was taking breaks outside to eat or drink.

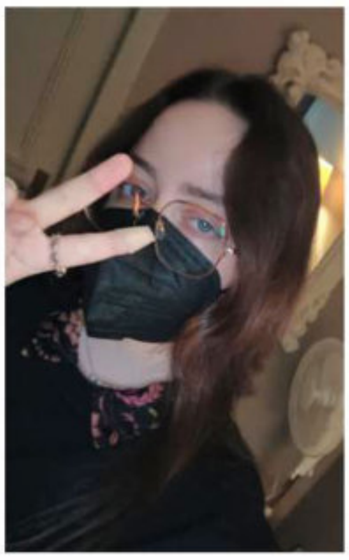
And my latest seminar, I learned a coworker was coming while sick, so I wore a mask for the 4 days I spent with them. I kept it on at the table during the long meals if I wasn't actively eating, and was opening windows everywhere I could. It worked out okay.



January 2025, going to my first seminar - my first time meeting my coworkers in person except for one. The ones I met at the train station saw me with my mask, I explained why, and one said "you're right to protect yourself".

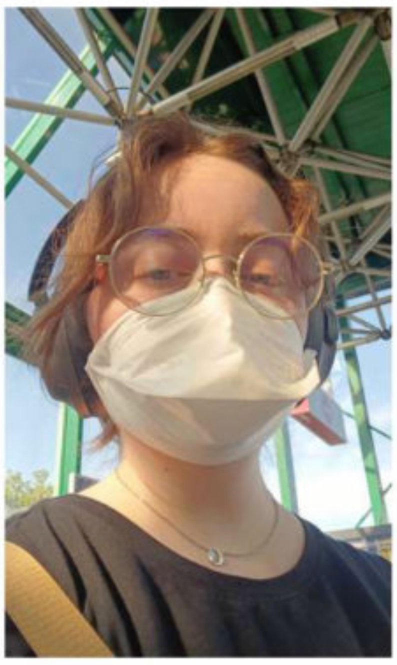


February 2025, visiting an event space for work



October 2025, work seminar

Spending time with the people I love

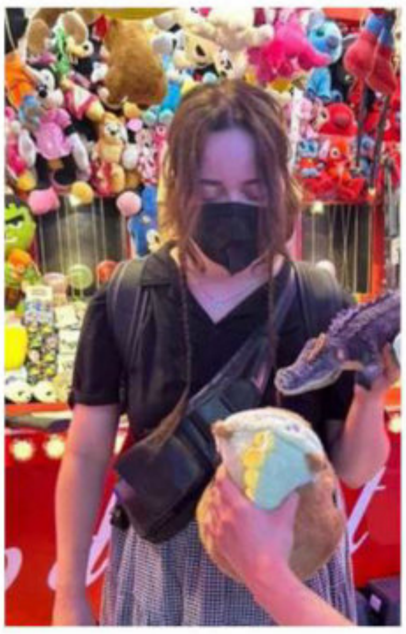


Spring 2025, taking the train to visit family

June 2025, this one isn't a masked pic but I thought it was a fun picture (antigen tests in the bag of snacks I brought to a picnic for a friend and I's shared birthday party)

There's people I don't always mask around, and I'm able to do that **because I do the rest of the time**. My girlfriend. My pod of friends who also mask in public spaces. Family members who get offended if I wear it - still don't understand why, but since they're old and don't go out much, I mostly would wear around them for their own sake. Since I take little risk outside of visiting them, there's less chances I'll bring something to them. My mom - since when I visit I spend several days there and we share a living space. She sometimes masks with me when we're in public crowded spaces.

Wearing a mask also allows me to see loved ones who that is a requirement for, and to isolate for shorter amounts of time after a trip for example - instead of 2 weeks without seeing anyone, make it masked outdoors hangouts after a few negative tests.



At the fair with friends

August 2025, on the way to a birthday party :)

September 2025, participating in a little creative workshop at a fun outdoors festival

Doing things I think are important

L'ETAT EN FEU
LES TERF
AU MILIEU

May 2024, marching at pride

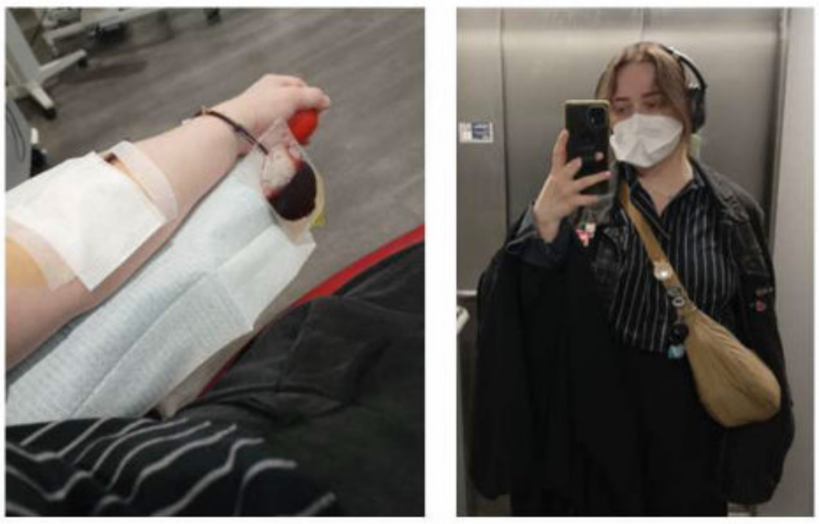
✨*the fit*✨

March 2025, protesting

I'll also add there are other very good reasons to wear a good quality mask in particular at a protest.

Concealing your face from police and cameras, not breathing in smoke bombs from the crowd or tear gas from the cops, on top of not spreading viruses and making community and activism accessible and safe to more people. Masks give us back some power by protecting our privacy, fighting back against the constant surveillance, adding a layer between our faces and facial recognition tools.
And avoiding getting sick allows me to have the energy to volunteer, participate in community and mutual aid, and to be healthy enough to donate plasma and blood *(not too often, the low iron crowd gets it)*.

May 2025, volunteer tabling on the Pride village



May 2025, donating plasma

I'm privileged I get to do a lot of the things I've shared here.

Many people don't, whether it has to do with Covid or not - I work remotely, travel once a year, have hobbies and a safe queer community near me to share with. I'm grateful I get to do all of that.

DON'T SELL THIS ZINE!

Those are not only things I can ***still*** do while wearing a mask, caring about clean air and the spread of viruses, they're mostly things I didn't even do ***before***.

The (still ongoing) pandemic took away a lot of these activities for a lot of people. Not because they decided to keep wearing a mask after it was no longer mandatory, but because the illness took away their health, their energy, their lives, or those of someone close to them.

Covid stopped them from "living their lives". *Caring about Covid* did not.

"Not moving on" is entirely rational when the situation you're expected to "move on" from isn't even over yet.

"Still caring" sounds like a good thing to me, not a read.

We're not "stuck in the past" for practicing care and measures meant to keep us safe from a still active threat.

DON'T SELL THIS ZINE!

I *am* living!!!!! what are you talking about!!!!!

I am living.

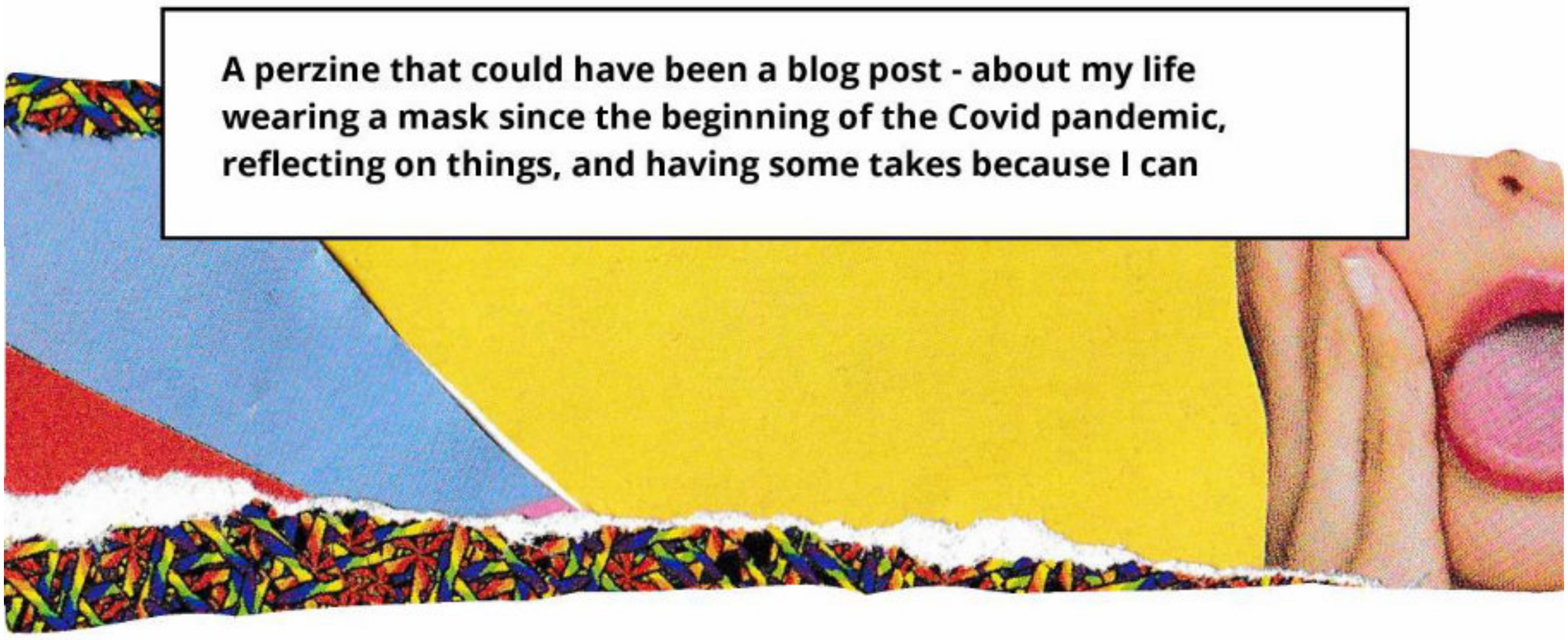
And I'd like to keep doing it.

And I care about not ending someone else's life.

So I'm living with a mask on my face, tests in my pharmacy box and clean air advocates in my circle.

Fucking watch me <3

A perzine that could have been a blog post - about my life wearing a mask since the beginning of the Covid pandemic, reflecting on things, and having some takes because I can



I'm genuinely open to discussing why and how I wear a mask and try to keep myself and others safe from airborne viruses, if you'd like to chat. I'm no expert or scientist and what I do is imperfect but I can share personal experience.

Find me and more of my zines here:
https://linktr.ee/starkittyzines
I'm @starkittyzines on Tumblr, Instagram, Ko-fi and Itch.io. I have a bunch of free zines and a collection of Covid/masking related zines on Ko-fi.

Starkittyzines
November 2025

PLEASE DON'T SELL THIS ZINE! FEEL FREE TO PRINT FOR FREE USE AND DISTRIBUTION!